

SELLING "ELIXIRS OF LIFE"

A considerable portion of the Edwin Smith Papyrus written in the seventeenth century before Christ is devoted to discussion of

"The incantation for transforming an old man into a youth of twenty."

The subject was not new then, but can be traced back through further centuries until, like other historical data, it becomes lost in the mazes of mythology and antiquity. During nearly 4000 years since the early written accounts, there are numerous and more or less connected references in the literature of efforts and methods of restoring sexual youth to the aged. At almost every stage of world development are records of alleged discovery of the true elixir of life and its sale to the public by ubiquitous Ponce de Leons. Many of the vendors profited greatly by these sales, just as they are profiting now by promoting one or another of the numerous and "only sex restorers" offered for sale to a gullible public.

Amulets are still sold as in the days of Babylon. The "Fountain of Youth" wells of Egypt and of the Irish folk tales are always in the land of Bimini just around the corner. Sorcerers still bend over blue flickering braziers and vamp youth back into the aged as they did in the days of Hermippus.

The youth-restoring milk from the blended male and female goats of antiquity has been replaced by an easier but no more certain use of the goats' sexual organs.

Aged flappers, male and female, with the sagging tissues of their necks "hooked up" by surgeons, and their exposed wrinkles ironed out by massage until they look like billikens, insure plenty of propaganda that is utilizable as "news." As "exhibits," they apparently bask in the notoriety they gain from the pathetic exposition of their pictures and senile statements to the public. Their careers are usually short, because the old arteries go on hardening; the creaking joints continue to stiffen, and the brain continues to soften all the more rapidly because they are unnaturally speeded up and not allowed to grow old gracefully.

This remarkable opportunity, of publicity ready-made and a mad world trying to defeat God's edict, proves too much for some physicians who themselves fall for the glitter of gold and the tinsel of notoriety. This is the most sickening phase of the whole situation. The attitude and conduct of some physicians in California and elsewhere is casting reflection upon other members of a creditable profession and is causing many people who look to physicians for guidance, to jeopardize their health and squander their funds for a new youth that is no more attainable by the use of monkey glands, goat glands, or what not, than it was for those other silly fools who followed the incantations of the Nile doctors.

Two European "doctors," Steinach and Voronoff, now appear to be jockeying for first place in advance propaganda preparatory to making a fortune out of the health and lives of our citizens. One of them appears to be waiting for his much-advertised monkey farm in Africa to become suffi-

ciently populated with the strong healthy males of the species, while the other is to be accompanied by his own surgeon who will perform the "difficult," "new" operation that is old and is performed several hundred times a month in our country, to prevent propagation of the unfit.

In the meantime and while awaiting the arrival of these elderly "leaders" who apparently have not healed themselves, we are being entertained by the vulgarities of "little Voronoffs" from the ranks of our local profession. Their "press agents" are making them notorious; their disgusting, nauseating practices are damaging the standing of a humanitarian profession, and many silly, often senile, citizens, rich and poor, are being duped by alleged remedies for sexual impotence.

Our medical societies expel members who follow other cults, and they ought to expel advertising alleged "gland specialists." This not only for the honor of their profession, but for the cause of better medicine for all citizens.

Nothing in this editorial is intended to reflect upon the splendid research work going on in many places but which is not put forth prematurely by propagandizing specialists for their own aggrandizement and to the detriment of the public in health.

ECONOMIZING IN STATE "HOSPITALS"

According to news dispatches from Sacramento, as a result of the economy program of Governor Richardson, the cost of care of the patients in Napa State Hospital has been reduced from \$21.75 in November, 1922, to \$19.24 in November, 1923.

This information, which apparently is given out as something to be proud of, should be challenged in the name of those who are not able to speak for themselves. Such shamefully inadequate costs can be arrived at only by "special" methods of accounting or by rendering poor service to the sick. Every person who has the responsibility of providing a living knows that neither the 72 cents a day for 1922 nor the 64 cents a day for 1923 are sufficient to provide good housing, clothing, subsistence and other costs for healthy people, much less those who require all of these things and medical, surgical, nursing, laboratory and other forms of care in addition.

In no branch of medicine has greater progress been made than in the treatment and management of neuropsychiatry patients. The splendid results that are being reported from a few Government hospitals elsewhere and many private ones from everywhere are not attained at a cost of a few cents a day. The daily per capita actual cost of the minimum of good institutional, medical, surgical, nursing, X-ray, dietetic, laboratory, and other care of these patients is expressed in dollars instead of a fraction of a dollar. This regardless of the character of management or ownership of the institution rendering the service.

The ultimate cost to taxpayers is not so much greater for efficient care than it is for the custodial care still too prevalent in politically controlled "hospitals." This is because a much higher percentage of the patients become much improved and

many recover and are restored to usefulness when adequate treatment is given. Then, too, some healthy physicians and nurses cannot serve long and maintain their mental poise in some of these so-called hospitals that give such care to patients as is possible at a cost of a few cents a day.

The demands and criticisms of whole-minded patients and their friends in other classes of hospitals exert a powerful influence toward the constant improvement of these hospitals. There is no such chance in hospitals for those whose minds are darkened and where visiting periods are so rigidly controlled. This should make us all the more solicitous for the welfare of the benighted patients. Every known possibility for improvement in the mental and physical condition of each of these patients should be patiently exhausted before they are treated as derelicts.

Efficient "hospital" care of the mentally irresponsible is one thing and the "custodial" care of the hopelessly demented is another and much less expensive service. Both are necessary. No government should have the right to place patients in the "custodial care" class until they have been carefully studied by staffs of competent physicians under real hospital conditions and all hope of their betterment under any circumstances has been given up.

We do not believe that the people of California desire or, if they knew, would tolerate less than we have indicated for their fellow citizens who are unable to speak for themselves. Intelligent persons will very well know that adequate hospital and professional service is not, and cannot be, rendered at a cost of a fraction of a dollar a day.

The facts as to what is being done and what is not being done are matters of record, but until such time as some powerful and active civic organization becomes interested in the question, publication of additional facts would serve no useful constructive purpose.

WHY "POSITIVE HEALTH"?

The double negative has long been subjected to the attacks of grammarians for the very simple reason that its meaning is exactly the opposite of that intended. The double positive is not in such ill-repute because it is seldom used and only Shakespeare, with his "most unkindest cut," is permitted to use the double superlative without censure, if not without comment.

There is a double positive recently come into common usage by certain health workers, however, that ought to be consigned to the graveyard of things-that-never-should-have-been, and that is the phrase "positive health." Surely, disease in itself is negative and, consequently, health must be positive. Why paint the lily?

Some American medical journals are guilty of using this deplorable term, and at the recent International Health Education Conference in San Francisco it was lipped with great frequency. Of course, it is understood that the phrase is intended to cover generalities, but when we have so many words with which to be specific and so many health subjects that require exactness, why should we

positive the positive so glibly and so meaninglessly?

Health education is vastly more than the imparting of mere generalities. Pupils must receive their education in health by means of simple, direct statement of fact. The teacher who can talk only in vague generalities cannot teach. The public, furthermore, wants and will get its health information in definite terms. Leaders in the advance of the public health movement of today must know exactly the message that they have to give, and they must know how to present it in clear, simple, direct, plain Anglo-Saxon. Heavier pressure on the positive alone will never eliminate the negative, and ostrich-like methods in not recognizing disease will never result in the promotion of the public health.

COLORADO'S "MATERNITY LAW"

Colorado has a new "Maternity Law." It has some interesting features. Provisions are made for the expectant mother during the last six months of her pregnancy. The infant's welfare is assured during its first six months after birth. The operation of the law is in the hands of the Children's Court, over which Judge Ben Lindsay presides. Either the mother or friends may make application for relief, which includes all varieties, from cash to medical and hospital care. All proceedings are conducted in the most confidential manner. Physicians and hospitals and nurses are paid for their services.

Unmarried mothers are given the same confidential care as others, including loss of identity in maternity hospitals. Infants of unmarried mothers will be placed in homes upon request. The law also gives the court wide authority in dealing with the father responsible for an illegitimate child.

It is claimed for this law that it requires no enlargement of government machinery and that its benefits are easily and confidentially available without red tape to any mother unable to pay the necessary costs of adequate assistance.

The power of the court to require fathers to accept financial and other responsibility for their illegal children is expected to reduce the cost of operating this law to the taxpayers.

This all sounds too good to be true.

PERSONAL PUFFERY

No conscientious physician can examine large press-clipping services and read the great number of letters that pour into the office of any medical organization without becoming gravely concerned over the tendencies of so-called "education of the public" in medical subjects. The movement for Medical and Public Health Education for the Public is as old as medicine itself. There are on file in libraries plenty of resolutions and discourses upon it dating back through the centuries. We have recently read some that might be republished today, as new and as appropriate as they were when originally presented centuries ago.

Of course the public should be informed—as far as they are capable of comprehending without medical education—upon all subjects pertaining to